

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A unit for preparing leaves of paper material from a continuous strip caused to advance along a predetermined feed path, including:

a cutting mechanism means, by which the leaves are separated in succession from the strip at a predetermined cutting frequency, comprising a first aspirating conveyor and a second conveyor substantially tangential to the first conveyor; the first aspirating conveyor comprising a first suction roller and an outer surface of the first suction roller being at least a portion of an outer surface of the first conveyor.

means for varying a tension of the strip, associated with the first conveyor, by which the tension of the advancing strip is varied cyclically and synchronously with the action of the cutting mechanism means, capable of cyclical movement generated synchronously with the cutting frequency; the tension varying means comprising at least one diverter element revolving about a fixed axis parallel to an axis of the first conveyor between a first limit position radially below the surface of the suction roller and a second limit position radially beyond the surface of the suction roller two limit positions relative to an outer, strip-contacting surface of the first conveyor, wherein one of the two limit positions is external to an outer surface of the first conveyor and the other of the two limit positions is internal to the outer surface of the first conveyor.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently amended) A unit as in claim 31, wherein the fixed axis about which the diverter element revolves is positioned between an axis of the first suction roller and the outer surface of the first suction roller.

5. (Previously presented) A unit as in claim 4, wherein the outer surface of the first suction roller is afforded by a plurality of cantilevered aspirating sectors arranged around a periphery of a supporting disc and separated one from the next by a uniform angular distance in such a way as to create a gap between each two adjacent sectors.

6. (Previously presented) A unit as in claim 5, wherein the second conveyor comprises a second roller supporting a plurality of substantially radially aligned blades equispaced angularly around and projecting from the peripheral surface of the second roller.

7. (Previously presented) A unit as in claim 6, wherein each aspirating sector presents a relative longitudinal corner edge extending parallel to the rotational axis of the first suction roller and combining with a corresponding blade of the second roller to scissor-cut the continuous strip.

8. (Previously presented) A unit as in claim 7, wherein the tension varying means further comprises a shaft, rotatable about the fixed axis about which the diverter element revolves, of which a free end carries a flange located on a side of the first suction roller opposite from a disc carrying the aspirating sectors, wherein the flange carries a plurality

of diverter elements comprising cylindrical rods disposed parallel to the fixed axis, projecting toward the disc and designed to pass cyclically through the gaps between adjacent sectors during the rotation of the first suction roller, as the shaft rotates about the fixed axis.

9. (Previously presented) A unit as in claim 8, wherein the flange presents a substantially triangular configuration and carries one of the cylindrical rods at each vertex.

10. (Previously presented) A unit as in claim 9, wherein the shaft carrying the flange is driven in rotation from a shaft carrying the disc of the first suction roller.

Claims 11-20: Cancelled

21. (Previously presented) A unit as in claim 5, wherein the tension varying means further comprises a shaft, rotatable about the fixed axis about which the diverter element revolves, of which a free end carries a flange located on a side of the first suction roller opposite from a disc carrying the aspirating sectors, wherein the flange carries a plurality of the diverter elements comprising cylindrical rods disposed parallel to the fixed axis, projecting toward the disc and designed to pass cyclically through the gaps between adjacent sectors during the rotation of the first suction roller, as the shaft rotates about the fixed axis.

22. (Previously presented) A unit as in claim 21, wherein the flange presents a substantially triangular configuration and carries one cylindrical rod at each vertex.

23. (Previously presented) A unit as in claim 22, wherein the shaft carrying the flange is driven in rotation from a shaft carrying the disc of the first roller.

24. (New) A unit for preparing leaves of paper material from a continuous strip caused to advance along a predetermined feed path, including:

a cutting mechanism, by which the leaves are separated in succession from the strip at a predetermined cutting frequency, comprising a first aspirating conveyor and a second conveyor substantially tangential to the first conveyor; the first aspirating conveyor comprising a first suction roller and an outer surface of the first suction roller being at least a portion of the outer surface of the first conveyor;

means for varying the tension of the strip cyclically and synchronously with the action of the cutting mechanism, capable of cyclical movement generated synchronously with the cutting frequency; the tension varying means comprising at least one diverter element revolving about a fixed axis parallel to an axis of the first conveyor between a first limit position radially behind the surface of the suction roller and a second limit position radially beyond the selfsame surface; the fixed axis about which the diverter element revolves is positioned between an axis of the first suction roller and the outer surface of the first suction roller; the outer surface of the first suction roller being afforded by a plurality of cantilevered aspirating sectors arranged around a periphery of a supporting disc and separated one from the next by a uniform angular distance in such a way as to create a gap between each two adjacent sectors; the tension varying means further comprising a shaft, rotatable about the fixed axis about which the diverter element revolves, of which a free end carries a flange located on a side of the first suction roller

opposite from a disc carrying the aspirating sectors, wherein the flange carries a plurality of the diverter elements comprising cylindrical rods disposed parallel to the fixed axis, projecting towards the disc and designed to pass cyclically through the gaps between adjacent sectors during the rotation of the first suction roller, as the shaft rotates about the fixed axis.